

WASHINGTON – America's veterans will see a record investment in their health care, mental health services, claims processing and prosthetics research under an omnibus appropriations package passed this evening by U.S. Rep. Harry Mitchell and the House of Representatives.

H.R. 2764 was passed with a vote of 253 to 154 to 1.

"The previous Congress turned its back on our nation's veterans, creating a backlog of 400,000 veterans waiting for benefits, and pushing the average wait time for those with post-traumatic stress disorder to 90 days," said Mitchell. "This legislation makes a historic investment in veterans' care and sends a clear message to our men and women in uniform that putting veterans first means more than just lip service. It means providing our veterans with the resources to get the care they have earned and deserve."

The legislation invests \$43.1 billion for the Department of Veterans' Affairs, a \$6.6 billion increase above 2007 funding levels, including

- \$37.2 for the Veterans' Health Administration, a \$4.5 billion increase above 2007, including \$29 billion specifically for medical services.
- \$2.9 billion for mental health care and substance abuse services, \$100 million above 2007 levels.
- \$480 million for medical and prosthetic research, an increase of \$66 million above 2007 levels.
- \$130 million for assistance for homeless veterans, an increase of \$38 million above 2007 levels.

According to the Associated Press, "the backlog of claims" of veterans who are currently waiting for treatment or benefits has reached "ranges from between 400,000 to more than 600,000, with delays averaging 177 days." [Source: [Associated Press](#) , May 4, 2007]

Earlier this year, the Government Accountability Office reported that "VA may face a challenge in meeting the demand for PTSD services. VA officials estimated that follow-up appointments for veterans receiving care for PTSD may be delayed up to 90 days." [Source: [General Accounting Office Report](#) , March 5, 2007]